

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence, City Hall

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

July 28, 2011

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. School Committee Members present: Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi, Charles Tsonos. Also present: Mr. Edward Daft, Interim Superintendent of Schools. Robert Silva, Esq. and Andrew Thomas, Esq., School department legal counsel.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Moment of Silence were observed.

Public Comment I - None

Report: Interim Superintendent's Report

School Construction Work Update - Mr. Daft reported that the Building Committee met last week and it was decided that the Finance Director and project manager, Farrar Associates would provide reports. Mr. Daft requested that Finance Director, Mary King provide an update. Ms. King reported that work has been proceeding at a quick pace; the biggest area of first phase of the bond is for life

safety issues and roof repairs; that work is progressing and going well; on the Esco Bond work, Johnson Controls is moving forward with boiler, lighting, and elevator work which is going well. The upgrades at the Career Technical Center are moving forward in the areas of Cosmetology and Culinary paid for by transfer of funds from the state which was received today; they will continue to move forward with that work. Mr. Farrar, Project Manager, will attend the August 9th meeting to provide a more detailed report and update.

Finance Report – Mary King, Finance Director advised that as of June 30th, we are 2/3 of the way through the school year; funding is on target with another state payment expected at the end of our fiscal year. On the expenditure report, as previously reported, we do expect a \$1.7 million deficit for this fiscal year, due to increased costs in maintenance, loss of Education Jobs Funds and some other areas since the budget was prepared.

In response to a question from Mr. Furtado regarding the transportation line items; Ms. King explained it is based on the way we budget and record for the Uniform Chart of Accounts; we are pretty much where we need to be if those line items are put together.

Mr. Tsonos recognized Mr. Ed Catelli, Director of Facilities for the City and Schools, thanked him for attending the meeting; asked for his input at School Committee meetings at any time.

**Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence –
Mary King presented the personnel items:**

RESIGNATIONS

Jennifer Roy Assistant Principal – High School-Effective July 6, 2011

Larisa Badger, Librarian-Elementary-Effective 06/24/2011

Lisa Anderson, School Nurse – Meadowcrest-Effective Immediately

Nancy Flanagan, RTI Specialist – RMS - Effective Immediately

**Nancy Lopes, Supervisory Assistant – Whiteknact Elementary
School -Effective Immediately**

**Michael Lefort, Head Baseball Coach – East Providence High
School-Effective Immediately**

Gregory Jones, Assistant Football Coach-EPHS-Effective Immediately

Scott Brown, Freshman Football Coach – EPHS Effective Immediately

RETIREMENT

Francine Lasnier – School Nurse/Teacher 21 years

PERSONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Larry Namerow Science Teacher – East Providence High School

2011-2012 School Year

Lauren Salzillo Grade 1 Teacher – Orlo Elementary School Effective

2011-2012 School Year

Crystal Monteiro Grade 3 Teacher – Francis Elementary School

Effective 2011-2012 School Year

Mary Snow Special Education Teacher – Waddington Elementary

School Extended School Year

Program (ESY) 1 Year Summer 2011

Janet Johnson School Nurse/Teacher-RMS Effective 2011/2012

School Year

Julie Denis Occupational Therapist Effective 2011-2012 School Year

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Michelle Malmstrom, Special Education Teacher – Martin M/S-

Effective September 19, 2011-13 weeks

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes –A motion was made by Mr. Tellier to approve the minutes of the meetings held on June 21, 2011 and June 23, 2011, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0. (Minutes of the June 14, 2011 meeting were tabled)

Action Items

Personnel Appointments/Recalls – Mary King presented the personnel items:

APPOINTMENTS

**Aroxie DeBlois - Assistant Principal – East Providence High School
(Reorganization)**

**Cheryl Gibbs - Principal Extended School Year - Waddington
Elementary 2011
(Resignation)**

Paula Freitas- Portuguese Teacher – RMS - (Resignation)

**Diane Milia - Special Education Teacher - Behavioral Class – MMS
(student enrollment)**

**Erin Rupert Special Education Teacher – East Providence High
School (Open from Job Fair)**

**Ruth Donahue Librarian – Elementary (Resignation)
(Oldham/Whiteknact)**

Jennifer Malafronte 3/5th Speech Pathologist (LOA)

**Mr. Daft requested approval to fill positions (TBA) as part of the
reorganization plan and will bring**

**names of candidates forward for approval when ready. Positions are:
Special Education Teacher and**

Teacher Assistant needed for a Behavioral Class at Martin Middle

School due to student enrollment; a Kindergarten position needed at Oldham due to student enrollment and an Elementary Librarian due to a resignation) (Silver Spring/Orlo).

APPOINTMENTS - Pre-approved positions on June 21st School Committee docket.

**Greg Amore (50%) Portfolio Instructional Teacher (Social
Joseph Vierra (50%) Studies) East Providence High School**

**Kelly Carlos-Fontaine PE/Health/Adaptive-Elementary from 4/5th
position to 5/5th position
(Enrollment- Oldham)**

RECALLS

**Arthur Sherman Physical Education/Health/Adaptive (1 year) Physical
Ed–Elementary
(due to LOA)**

Erin Connors Biology Teacher-EPHS (1 Year) (LOA)

Diane Macedo 1:1 Teacher Assistant –Meadowcrest

Colleen Kinder 1:1 Teacher Assistant – Francis

Mr. Furtado asked why the ESY appointment was not on last docket,

since the program had already started. Mr. Daft explained that the position was decided later; at that time, the special education department was looking to create its own program; but decided later that there was still a need to have the Extended School Year program at Waddington which required a principal.

Mr. Tellier asked what schools the 3/5 speech pathologist would be servicing. Cheryl Ursillo, Interim Director of Pupil Personnel responded that it might be Kent Heights. In response to Mr. Tellier's questions regarding other speech pathologists, Ms. Ursillo offered to research the issue and get back to him with the answer because it would depend if others hired as service providers were still interested.

Mr. Tellier wanted to make sure we were fully staffed for opening of school; Ms. Ursillo will provide that information to him through an email.

In response to a question from Mr. Furtado regarding an open position due to Leave of Absence for an Occupational Therapist, Ms. Ursillo advised that the position had been advertised and interviews conducted shortly. Mrs. Abatecola asked how many candidates had applied for the Assistant Principal

position; Mr. Daft responded that the number was culled down to five candidates; he thanked all who served on interview committees over the summer.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado accept the appointments as listed (not including TBA), seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to approve the positions listed as TBA as recommended by the Superintendent, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Requisitions – Bill List

Warrant #1109	6/24/11	\$	7,190.00
Warrant #1110	6/30/11	\$	850,044.30
Warrant #1111	7/6/11	\$	3,125.04
Warrant #1112	7/6/11	\$	2,757.98
Warrant #1113	7/21/11	\$	830,200.84
Warrant #1114	7/21/11	\$	87,337.58
Warrant #1115	7/21/11	\$	997,937.23
Warrant #1116	7/21/11	\$	500.00

Motion: Mrs. Rossi/Second: Mrs. Abatecola. Discussion: In response to Mr. Tellier, Ms. King advised that these warrants were included in the financial report presented earlier. Vote 5-0.

Awarding of Bid – Mary King presented the recommendation that the bid for 40 HP notebooks (paid out of CRP grant funds; special education to implement a tie net system) be awarded to Gov Connection in the amount of \$24,917.60 (Laptops for Special Education). A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to approve, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Discussion: Mr. Tellier asked if we can use Consolidated Resource Plan grant funds for anything else and if we should wait on this purchase. Mary King responded that we cannot pay other bills with these funds; funds for items allowed under the CRP (CRP-able items) cannot be used for general funds. Vote 5-0.

Grant Writer - Mrs. Rossi explained that the School Committee has had past discussions about this; she made a motion to go forward to start looking for a full time grant writer for the School Department, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Discussion regarding if this would be a salaried or commission position.

Mr. Daft stated that he and other staff met with a grant writer, Carol Bissante, at the direction of the Chair to discuss options and concerns; in some cases salaries cannot be paid through the grant funds.

Mr. Tsonos stated that if the grant does not specify that the writer can be paid with the funds, you cannot use the grant money to pay the grant writer; he thinks we do need to explore grant writing, but cannot support hiring a full time person now. He suggested that Ms. Bissante could meet with the School Committee to provide

information on grant writing; he prefers to get more direction and have more discussion on it. Mrs. Rossi asked if Ms. Bissante would be able to provide information and a course of action. Mr. Tsonos explained that the initial meeting was an exchange of information to see whether she or anyone else could help with this project and that the meeting last week was just exploratory to get more information from full time staff first. Mrs. Rossi asked to schedule a meeting. Mr. Tsonos requested that Mr. Daft arrange a presentation at a School Committee meeting. Mrs. Rossi rescinded her motion and asked to table the item to the next meeting.

Gifted Program School Year 2012-13 - Mrs. Rossi stated that there are many gifted children in East Providence who are not challenged fully and felt there was a need to expose students to extra activities; at one time, she was part of that group of students and would like to offer that same opportunity to other students; Mrs. Rossi made a motion that we begin to craft and implement a Gifted & Talented Program to challenge students in Grades 4-8 for the 2012-13 school year. Mr. Tsonos asked if this action would include establishing a committee to be able to move forward with this action; he would be glad to help as he felt that the School Department can be improved on in many ways. Mrs. Rossi responded that Mrs. Maia, a former teacher, would be happy to participate in order to provide information and guide the School Committee in the right direction, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Consolidation of Information Technology Dept. with City of EP - Mrs. Rossi has had numerous discussions with Ms. Kelly Ahrens, IT Director for the School Department and she is extremely confident that a consolidation with the city is completely doable. A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to consolidate the School Department and City Information Technology Departments, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Discussion: Mr. Furtado asked to include in the motion that the Director position would stay with Ms. Kelly Ahrens. Vote 5-0.

Consolidation of Human Resources - Mrs. Rossi explained that the consolidation of these departments is in a bit of a bind, since the School Department H/R department is missing vital employee(s) and the city is stretched to the limit; the reason for consolidation is to produce a better product which is more cost effective, but currently both areas are in distress and would not produce cost saving right now. A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi that we hire a temporary H/R director to put the School Department in a better place and revisit the consolidation issue in six months. Discussion: Mr. Furtado was not sure that hiring an extra body short term would be a good idea with budget concerns and tight constraints with money.

Although Mrs. Rossi agreed, she felt that H/R was not covered and employees were not getting 100% what they deserve with no H/R professional to handle matters; Mrs. Whalen was hired as Benefits Director and employees not being helped as well as should be. Mr. Furtado would rather that Mary King and Mr. Daft come up with a plan before hiring anyone in order to have a direction to go in. Mr.

Tellier asked if reorganization would even be possible without a department head and if that was the best place to start. Mr. Daft stated that he would like to have someone come in and take a look at the department to determine what is best for the organization; he is not opposed to restructuring; he, Mary King and Dr. Caswell have taken steps to help it run more efficiently; H/R needs are not being served in the best capacity. In response to Mr. Furtado's question regarding an interim director, Mr. Daft explained that it would probably cost a substantial amount of money to do that; he is not opposed to that because we need the help, but would like to look at all the options first.

Mr. Tsonos stated that he attended a meeting today at the state with the Auditor General and we are in dire straits; he would prefer some thinking outside of the box on what we can we do in-house to address the problem; possibly contacting the Acting City Manager to see if there are resources there to help us since we do not have money for much if anything; he would like to explore it and agreed that we have to address it, but hiring someone right now may not be something we can afford; he would like to do it in house. Mary King stated that she has spoken with Ms. Scanlon at the city office who has more experience and has two administrative type employees; she has lots of issues as well and is straight out; in the school department there are three areas: benefits and contracts, hiring and recruiting, and grievance issues with 900 employees who deserve H/R intervention; although we have good people in the school

department, they are not experienced and limited like the city. We need someone to come in and look at statistics and standards to follow if we are looking for consolidation between the city and schools. Bringing these two departments together the way they are operating now is not in the best interest of the School Department.

Mrs. Rossi stated that although she would like to consolidate the departments, she agrees it should not be done with two limping departments; she is asking to bring someone in for six months to reevaluate our status; we cannot continue on; functions are not being pulled off; we just need someone with experience.

Mr. Tsonos asked about the job title for Mrs. Whalen to which Mrs. Rossi replied it is Benefits Director. Mrs. Rossi argued that someone is needed to take the helm and provide us with H/R needs; we would have to look at comparable salaries and reach out to other districts to come up with the cost.

Mr. Daft stressed that there is a need to investigate this and put thought into this if we are to do it right; it is obvious we need help on how to reorganize. Mr. Tsonos felt there was a need to drill down on this more; maybe the answer is more staff; not a director; he was more adverse to hiring full time, but he would not be adverse to hiring someone temporarily. A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to direct the Superintendent to present a plan at the next meeting , seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0

Old Business

Deficit Elimination - Mr. Tsonos attended a meeting today with state administration and the Auditor General who has directed the city and school department to submit a deficit elimination plan to the state within thirty days; city officials will set up a meeting of either the prior Deficit Elimination Committee or under a new format to address the city's debt together.

Mrs. Rossi stated that last week she recommended several new potential moneymakers for the city and schools and some ways to save money; she felt that her plan was worth looking into to both generate revenue and to save some money; on the school side she would like to begin looking into those ideas. Mrs. Rossi asked to incorporate some of these items in the budget and to direct the Superintendent to begin expansion of those items such as advertising on the website, raising the deductibles on health insurance and other items she suggested moving forward with.

Mr. Tsonos stated that many of the proposals were discussed by the Deficit Elimination Committee and by the School Committee; however, there are two big problems: short term financing of the School Department and long term plans. The Auditor General issue needs to be addressed initially and any ideas need to be vetted legally and through RI Department of Education which will take time; any idea is worth exploring, but we are in dire straits yesterday; the

Fire Chief also put forth ideas, many of which will take time to research. He felt that to direct any movement forward; the Superintendent and School Committee need to work with the legal team to make sure we are not on any slippery slopes.

Mr. Tsonos advised that the city has been directed to submit a deficit elimination plan which will be acceptable to the Auditor General according to state laws; they denied our other plans because laws were not fulfilled; there is a lot going on right now with construction, opening schools on time, addressing the H/R area, implementing consolidation, and a need to provide the Deficit Elimination Plan. Mr. Tsonos advised that the city will be calling a meeting within 7-10 days to meet with the School Committee. He would like to first work with the city on that plan and look at other ideas down the road since that will take more time; we can each investigate and research ideas; but the deficit elimination plan must be the priority. Mrs. Rossi agreed to table this issue until the next meeting

New Business

New Policy – Advertising on School Property (First Passage) Motion by Mr. Tellier to accept the first passage of the policy, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Mr. Furtado mentioned that approval must be received by RI Department of Education first.

Andrew Thomas stated that after second passage, he would send the

policy to the state for final review and approval. In terms of the specifics, it is up to the School Committee whether they want to commit to an advertising policy; this area can cause some problems and we have to be careful what the School Committee accepts or not and have to be careful that once opened up to limited public forum, there is a need for criteria on what we allow or not; we need objective standards.

Mr. Tsonos asked if we accept money from one vendor, are we obligated to take money from another with similar products. Mr. Thomas advised that exclusive rights are not really addressed in the policy.

Mr. Furtado asked if any restrictions regarding federal funds. Mr. Thomas did not know about any exclusions and would rely on RIDE for their judgment. This is an area where we have not gone before and there can be unanswered questions; we have looked at other school departments and what will pass muster for an acceptable policy for this department. No other discussion. Vote 5-0.

Revised Policy I.E. School Committee By-Laws (First Passage) Mr. Tellier reviewed changes: strike the need for signing up for Public Comment; change time to speak from three to five minutes and add the stipulation under guidelines that any speaker would not be allowed to make personal attacks and would forfeit their time to speak if they did so. Motion seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0.

Revised Policy V.A. 11 Transportation (First Passage) – Mr. Daft received a request from Mr. Linneman, Transportation Director, to change the policy to: “For any student living $\frac{3}{4}$ mile or more from his or her school” to receive bus transportation in Grades K-5. The present policy was $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Mr. Furtado stated that in years past, there were discussions about changing the transportation line requirements. Mr. Daft will continue to look at all options including bussing to save money. A motion was made to approve by Mr. Tellier, seconded by Mr. Furtado and Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

School Committee Policies - Mrs. Rossi reviewed the policy book and found areas which need to be tightened up; she requested that the policy subcommittee review those areas, such as the School Committee Bylaws; example: change the time and place of meetings; change Facilities Director title. I/T Director, Kelly Ahrens is looking into the possibility of creating a digital library on-line where policies can be easily read and changes made. Mr. Furtado mentioned that policy subcommittee meetings may be subject to open meeting law posting. Mr. Tellier suggested that if there is an issue with any policy, changes should be forwarded to the School Committee for input on those changes at a School Committee meeting; that process has worked well up to now.

Teachers’ Contract Signatures - Mrs. Rossi requested that the signing

of the contract be expedited; the contract was ratified but not completed for signatures. Mr. Tsonos advised that this matter is in the hands of legal counsel; he agreed it should have been signed a long time ago; however this School Committee and legal team was not involved in the process and have asked for legal guidance. Mrs. Rossi pointed out that the contract is about three months away from expiring. Mr. Robert Silva, Legal Counsel, reported that he still had unanswered questions as to what the changes were supposed to be and has still not signed off on it. Out of an abundance of caution, he wanted to make sure the substance is correct; this process was over two School Committees and two legal counsel appointments; therefore, he needs to be sure the document reflects what was actually agreed to during negotiations. Mr. Silva will get to it hopefully by the next meeting; he will not be available on August 9th but will be in touch with Mr. Thomas regarding this matter.

Memorandum of Agreement between the City of East Providence and School Department - Mrs. Rossi asked if the agreement had been signed for the Director of Maintenance regarding consolidation of positions between the School Department and the city. Mr. Silva advised that the documents had been signed by the Chair and sent to the city solicitor, but had not been returned to him with signatures; he had a telephone conversation with the city solicitor about concerns with some of the language, but has not received anything back from the city. Mr. Silva will follow up.

Regarding the MOA for the Director of Information Technology, Mr. Silva will put that together; Mrs. Rossi will provide information to him and they will do same for the I/T positions; the end product will be an MOA that both sides will be comfortable with and be able to sign.

Public Comment II

Thomas C. Riley, 3620 Pawtucket Ave, commented that 87% of the budget is salary, pensions, and benefits; he suggested that step increases not be supported and to freeze them until at least next year.

He was concerned about the Superintendent being de-hired since he shaved \$18 million off school expenses this year; Mr. Riley thought he should be put back to work since we are pressed for money. He spoke about possible revenues to the schools from the Pond View operations in Rumford and suggested that School Committee members use their political clout to talk to legislators and city officials to see how East Providence can benefit from revenues generated by an expansion of the Pond View recycling facility, rather than sending that business to Johnston. He mentioned that there are offensive smells from the dump and the sewer plant in Riverside but no one is suggesting shutting down those facilities.

Middle School Principal Interview- Mr. Ed Daft reported that candidates were interviewed for a one year opening at Riverside Middle School and he recommended his top choice, Mr. Stephen Prew, who has worked in the district for 12 years and is competent and capable. Mr. Prew addressed the School Committee; through his positions as an assistant at the high school and Martin Middle School

he has been involved in every aspect of running a school and is confident taking the position of Principal at Riverside Middle School, working together with Mr. McCarthy.

A motion was made by Mrs. Abatecola to approve, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote -0. Mr. Tsonos requested that Riverside Middle School host a School Committee in the near future.

Announcements

Mrs. Abatecola - EP Prevention Coalition recruiting new board members; contact Ms. Wall at City Hall or check the city website for information

Mrs. Rossi: Requested donations of school supplies to help families who cannot afford them; she will have a collection box at each meeting. Also the build date for Waddington playground is Saturday, September 10th at 7AM; please call her at 481-1721 if more information is needed; they are looking for skilled and unskilled laborers to help with this community build for the neighborhood and school. At the Career and Technical school there are enrollment openings in auto technology, auto collision, construction and landscaping; please call the high school guidance department to sign up students. The YMCA has partnered with Wal-Mart to provide free lunches at Pierce Field for children. Reminder of new start times for school: high school 7:50AM, Middle Schools 8:20, elementary and full day K 8:55AM; information is listed on the school department website. Congratulations to the Riverside Boys' All-star team, district two champions.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado that the Committee convene in

Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1), Collective Bargaining R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2) Litigation/Pending Litigation -R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2), seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0

Motion to return to Open Session by Mr. Furtado, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0 to return to Open Session (five in favor -none against).

Motion by Mr. Furtado to seal the minutes of Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0 to seal the minutes of the Executive Session.

Motion by Mr. Furtado to approve Memorandum of Agreement in settlement of litigation with Anne Marie Quattrucci, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0 to approve the Memorandum of Agreement (five in favor - none against).

Motion by Mr. Furtado to award Mr. Daft a \$1,000 per month stipend for service as Interim Superintendent retroactive to his appointment as Interim Superintendent, seconded by Mr. Tellier.

Vote 5-0 to award Mr. Daft a \$1,000 monthly stipend for service as Interim Superintendent retroactive to his appointment.

Motion by Mr. Furtado to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0 to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Andrew Thomas, Esq.

Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee